

# ALL LIFE DIVINE

BY

EDWARD EVERETT HALE

---

BOSTON.

GEO. H. ELLIS, 141 FRANKLIN STREET

1884



## ALL LIFE DIVINE.

---

“Know ye not that ye are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?”—I. COR. iii., 16.

A COMMON phrase says, truly enough, that we all live two different lives. Thus, the actress on the stage is swept away by her own passion and the sympathy of the audience as she represents Juliet, through her sufferings to her death. She leaves the scene, she takes off Juliet's dress to put on her own, and within an hour is quarrelling with the cabman who will not take her boxes up the steps of her lodging-house. That contrast between a life of the ideal and a life of fact is not stronger than the contrasts which each of us experience every day we live. Such is the contrast between a tranquil and happy evening at home, with books, with music, talk, play, and hearty love, and the sharp battle of the next day, when I am under cross-examination in court or am untangling an account in which a sharper is trying to cheat me. The boy, who is in paradise as he is lost in *Ivanhoe* or the *Three Guardsmen*, is called out of his paradise to his other self, when his father calls him to shovel the snow from the sidewalk. The woman, who as she read in *John Inglesant* how Molines saw heaven open and a Son of Man at the right hand of God, was wakened from her trance by the entrance of the cook, who came in to say she would not do the family washing. All of us in one hour mount on wings as eagles. In the next hour, we run and are very weary; and, as we walk, we faint.

All literature which is good for anything presents this contrast, and offers more or less distinctly solutions of the problem which asks how it is to be made tolerable. The winged Pegasus is yoked with the heavy ox in every life. And all literature which is good for anything asks how he who lives the life is to emancipate Pegasus, or how he is to quicken the ox to meet the flight of his companion. The devotional writers, such men as this Spaniard Molines,

whose work just now challenges attention again, want us to cut the winged horse free from the ox, and go off on him. We are to abandon the ox to his own ways, and have nothing to do with him. That is to say, we are to spend life in the contemplation of God and Christ, of saints and martyrs, and of an ideal heaven ; and we are to cut squarely loose from this world of cross-examinations, of cabmen and trunks, of cooks and washing, which we find it so hard to reconcile with the other. If you ask who is to build the furnace fire or who is to drive the street-car or to sail the ships, you get but a doubtful answer. Indeed, the asking such a question is thought to "disturb the harmony of the meeting."

Oddly enough, quite another set of advisers tell us to cut the winged horse loose, and to be done with him, while we hold to the ox in the partnership, as, being on the whole, the more reliable of the two. These visions of a brighter life, Mr. Gradgrind tells me, come to nothing. He puts them out of the way. In his young life, he went to the theatre once. But it cost him half a dollar, and he has never gone there again. He bought a story book a little after ; but it kept him out of bed, and he has never bought another. "You had better stick to the main chance," Mr. Gradgrind says. He is provoked when he sees people spend money on Christmas, till he finds that it sends the retailers more often to his ware-rooms. He will not release his clerks to serve as soldiers. But I found he was willing to accept the protection of the military when there was a draft riot in Dock Square.

Charles Dickens immortalized for us such a materialist, when he drew that story of Scrooge, which Mr. Locke Richardson repeated with so much spirit to our children two years ago.

If all life is to be hampered by a question of conscience between one of these theories of life and another, life is really hardly worth living. If, whenever I am reading George Eliot or Robert Browning or John Milton, a spectre is to wave his wand across the page, to warn me that I am wasting time, I shall wish to put the book in the fire and be done with it. If, on the other hand, when I am rubbing the stove with black-lead or clearing the snow from the sidewalk, another spectre is whispering to me that I should be serving God better, if I were carrying a taper in a procession in a cathedral, or committing to memory a collect or a hymn, why, then, the duty next my hand is simply the service of

Satan for me. And, in truth, though these spectres do not present themselves exactly in such form, a lurking suspicion that one is not living in the right line haunts many a boy and girl, many a man and woman. It rests at bottom on one or other of these two theories of life,—on the Gradgrind theory, which would suppress all ideal enthusiasm, or on the ascetic theory, which would trample out all bodily appetites and temporal desires.

It is the religionists and the preachers who are most responsible for the ascetic theory. It is they who have started orders of beggars on the world, and have filled insane hospitals with people who have tried to live on a diet of liturgies, sermons, and hymns. But, strangely enough, the New Testament knows nothing of this one-sided error, and, on the other hand, shows that true solution of the problem which monks and nuns failed to discover. Once come at the meaning of the words, "The kingdom of God is here," and the world of realities is the same as the ideal world. If God is with me always, I can sweep the floor to his glory, as George Herbert bids me. I can grind my corn with him, as Christ's parable shows me how. If the sunshine and the rain are God's present love to me, why I am at work with him when I plant my seed-corn and when I weed it. I walk with him as truly when beneath the water-line of the steamship I feed her furnace as Adam walked with him in the cool of the day, when they were both in the bowers of Paradise. And it is as easy for the spirit of God's child to show itself in the work he does in cleaving chestnut rails for a fence, as in the work Michel Angelo does in shaping the clay which represents the Saviour's smile. If God be with me, I shall work with him, for him, in him; and he works with me, for me, in me.

This does not mean that the life which deals with time and with things, is the same life as that which remembers and hopes, which repents and prays, which mounts with Gabriel when he sings, or which looks beyond Orion. But the gospel does mean that the things of to-day bear the same usage and may be handled in the same spirit as those realities of eternity. It is gospel, or glad tidings, because it means this, and makes it possible. Time or eternity, whichever I am dealing with, whether the bubble which is to break in a second or the psalm which is to echo forever, I who blow the bubble or who sing the psalm am the infinite child of the Eternal God. There is nothing small to him; and there should be nothing small to me; nothing so small but it may



be full of love like his love and joy like his joy, and nothing done with it but may tend to his infinite purpose. I may consecrate the deeds of my hands and the footsteps of my feet as truly as the words of my hymns or my prayers.

What is my daily duty? Unless I am selling poison behind the bar, unless I am leading the play at faro or roulette, or in some other way defying the divine law and trying to set it backward, my daily duty is simply work with God. It is the part he assigned me when this morning he went over the roll of his willing children, and divided among us all the services which we might render in that many-colored, many-sided, and many-issued enterprise in which he is the chief undertaker, and we work with him. I am shoveling coal upon the sidewalk, I fill with the heavy load the basket which I swing upon my back, I totter along a slippery path and discharge the load into the coal-bin of the man who has bought it from my employer. I return to the dirty heap, and I tread my slippery round again. Do you tell me this is a mean service, brutal and embruting? I tell you that the God of heaven cannot carry out his infinite purpose, unless I, or some one like me, volunteer to render him this special service. It was countless ages ago that the God of heaven set in order his agencies for making this winter tolerable in my home and my neighbor's here. Before man ever stepped upon the earth, when climate, air, and waters all glowed with heat they do not know to-day, God's sunlight and sun-heat called into being those forests of ferns and of reeds which, under the heat and pressure of centuries, have ripened into the coal harvest of to-day. Packed away there in the coal measures of Pennsylvania is the sunshine of ages before there were men, before there were beasts, before there were birds, waiting in store, that you and I may use it in this month of January, in the year 1884. In these later times, at this very fag-end of history, far-seeing and brave men, children of this God, have broken into these coal measures, and quarried this latent sunshine. Other brave men, far-seeing children of God, have used their faith and hope and love in collecting from every Christian land the tributes of their wealth, with which to build the iron road which shall take this latent sunshine from the mines to the sea. Consciously or unconsciously, these men were all God's children. They could not have entered thus into his work, had they not been alive with his life, faithful and hoping, nay, even loving with some measure of his love. And, when the coal

came to the sea, another set of his children handled it, and brought it here. I do not know, nay, I hardly care, if they know they were his servants. But this I know, that they never would have trusted themselves to wind and wave with such gallantry and such success, had they not been certain of the certainty of his law, had they not been children of God, partakers of the divine nature, and therefore faithful, hopeful, and brave. Other men, like them faithful and hopeful, received this precious burden at the pier. Ages upon ages had formed it,—nay, those words are too small: eras upon eras and epochs upon epochs of the present power and of the steady purpose of the constant love of an unchanging God had been needed, before this cargo of coal, freighted with its present provision for to-day's necessities of God's children, could be landed here in this town of Boston. And so had history and civilization and the laws of commerce organized this town that there were waiting at the pier these ministering servants of God, who were ready to take the priceless gift, and store it again, and reverently prepare it for the use of their fellow-men. And this morning this child of God, by whose house I am at work, my brother and theirs, sent to ask if he might have a share in this matchless benefaction which all the ages of time and all the powers of the universe have been preparing, so that his babies may not freeze to death to-night, and so that, this winter through, this may be a genial, glad, and happy home, fit home for God himself, and a part of the kingdom of his heaven. In that long series, almost infinite, of his tender thoughts for these the children of his love, I am so honored that I fill to-day the last place. As here I tread my weary round and bear my dirty load upon my shoulder, I close the circuit. I am the agent chosen by the God of the universe to present to these children of his this inestimable gift, which he has been preparing through the infinite ages of a father's love.

But my work does not stop here. I do not know whether they will think of me or not, and I do not care. He and I need not wince, though men be thoughtless or ungrateful. Nay, I do not know who these are who live in this palace through whose cellar I am walking. And I do not care. I know who I am. I know I am God's child. I am carrying this coal-basket as his commissioned officer. So the comfort of this palace through the months of this winter is due to him and to me. Every merry laugh, every happy hour spent beneath this roof this winter, is his gift and is

mine. For the merchant prince who lives in this palace could not inhabit it, nor could his household, unless I, or somebody like me, undertook this duty which you call brutal and embruting. And every plan which he shall devise for men's higher civilization, every word of poet or prophet which shall this winter take form beneath this roof, nay, every prayer of gratitude which shall here be breathed or every whisper of happy love which shall here be spoken, would all be impossible, were it not for the gift which my Father makes to them this day, and which he kindly suffers me, his son, to leave for him at their door.

I do not pretend of course, nor ask, that with every step of the coal-bearer's task he shall go through any such introspective analysis of his duty. But I do say that each one of us, wherever our tug may be, or whatever load we stagger under, ought to read between the lines of our appointment enough to know, in some wise, what duty is, how great it is in its origin and how infinite in its future. I say this is what religion is for, what oracles and prophets are for. That the business of this New Testament, for one instance, is so to make me at one with God that I shall spurn the words "slave" and "drudge," and never quail beneath the burden which I share with him and he shares with me. It is all written, and all spoken, that I may remember, whether I am toiling or resting, that I am born of him, and that in what I do that is right to do, I also am in the definite hierarchy, and am about my Father's business.

Translating such oracles into directions for daily duty, we do not find it hard to glorify the trivial round or the common task. Did that fountain at Nazareth become a shrine, where Jesus drew water for his mother? And cannot you serve your mother with like love, so as to make your home a shrine to all days to come for her and for you? Christ made his parables from pearls and shepherds, from village feasts and funerals. And you, can you not translate those parables into to-day's trade and to-day's society, your trade and the society in which you go and come?

I remember four noble and lovely women, who have since then led life where they lived in the heartiest and simplest way, who in their younger days had the weekly duty of the ironing of the family linen as their Tuesday's task. It was all the same to them. They did not wince nor whine under it, only they determined that it was better to finish it cheer-



fully in four hours than heavily in three. So they always took turns, one of the four, in reading aloud to the three who worked. So that, to this hour, the memories of those working days of girlhood are alive with the thoughts of Tennyson and Browning and Elizabeth Barrett; while the starch and the bluing, the sprinkling and the occasional burn, are all long ago forgotten. So is it that you and I recall the heaven of some happy walk with a dear friend, without one recollection of the mud or the dust, the foot-sore or the weariness, because love is eternal, and these things are things of time. True it is magic by which the things are thus remitted to obscurity and the eternal gifts of God take their places. Some fairy swung her wand, and Cinderella's kitchen disappeared and she found herself in a palace. Magic? Yes! But it is magic which every child of God can wield, and which he finds the spells for in the Testament he studied in the Sunday-school. He has only to assert his birthright and wave his hand, and the smoky cobwebs of his life are gilded tapestries, the kitchen chimney is a palace tower, and he knows himself an anointed prince, who is the son of the Sovereign.

I am not to disregard the life of things, as the ascetics, the hermits and monks, the dreamers, Buddhists, and Brahmins bid me. I am so to use these things which one day will crumble and perish that, when they fail, the children of light may welcome me. I am to use my angel equipment while I am in the mud and dust of my worldly business. I am to dismiss, at once and forever, that heathen notion that the vessel used for a sacrifice is too good to carry my children's food or my hound's drink. I am to dismiss at once and forever that heathen notion that God is on a journey or is shut up on Zion or in Gerizim. He is here. I live because he is here. What I have to do I do it with his strength. And I can so do it that it shall be an offering grateful in his eyes

"Forever free  
From jar is he,  
To whom Time as Eternity,  
Eternity as Time shall be."





